

CHAPTER XVI

MODERN POLITICS

THE vicissitudes of politics interest us so keenly because they give play to so great a variety of impulses. We admire our political leaders : were an impulse to admire or respect not innate in us. social life would have no centres around which to gravitate. We are moved by the success or failure of the party to which we have attached ourselves, because, having identified ourselves with it, we are excited by the feelings of emulation which set man to race against man. horse against horse. dog against dog. The daily changes in the political barometer gratify our passion for variety. We may be interested in the programme of undertakings to which our party commits itself, because it enlists the provident impulses that stimulate us to use our reason to ameliorate the conditions of the future : moreover, our kindly feelings may be appeased by the assurance that these undertakings will give happiness to persons or classes that have attracted our sympathy. The bitterness which is permissible in party politics affords a canalized outlet for our unkindly feelings. Finally, our self-conscious pride is soothed by the reflection that, in however moderate a degree, we can assist our party and its objects by our vote. and that we are actors, and not merely spectators, in the drama which each morning's newspaper before us.